UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.6/1995/5/Add.4
6 January 1995
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH, FRENCH
AND RUSSIAN

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
Thirty-ninth session
New York, 15 March-4 April 1995
Item 3 (c) of the provisional agenda*

PREPARATIONS FOR THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN: ACTION FOR EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE

Reports from regional conferences and other international conferences

Addendum

Regional Platform for Action - Women in a Changing World - Call for Action from an ECE Perspective

Adopted at the High-level Regional Preparatory Meeting of the Economic Commission for Europe, held at Vienna from 17 to 21 October 1994

* E/CN.6/1995/1.

95-06990 (E) 140395 150395

REGIONAL PLATFORM FOR ACTION - WOMEN IN A CHANGING WORLD - CALL FOR ACTION FROM AN ECE PERSPECTIVE

PREAMBULAR DECLARATION

We, Governments, participating in the ECE Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Fourth World Conference on Women, held at Vienna from 17 to 21 October 1994,

Desirous to make a useful contribution to the preparations for the Conference and to the establishment of the Platform for Action that will be produced by it,

Considering that the promotion of equality between women and men is a matter of priority for the international community,

Determined to contribute meaningfully to the promotion of a better world, based on the dignity and worth of the human person, the equal rights of women and men and of nations large and small, as stipulated in the Charter of the United Nations,

Realizing that every individual and the international community as a whole have a basic responsibility to respect the dignity of every human person, and this based on mutual respect and tolerance, thus to safeguard against all forms of violation, discrimination and exclusion.

Emphasizing the responsibilities of all States to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all and to encourage respect for them,

Reaffirming our commitment to the provisions contained in the international human rights instruments, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women

Convinced that the future of our societies and the progress of the region calls for increased joint efforts to promote equality and partnership between women and men, based on the observance of and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, cessation of all forms of discrimination and violence against women, especially trafficking in women and children and sexual exploitation, non-violent conflict resolution, democracy and peace with full and equal participation of women,

Conscious that the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000 requires further and accelerated action in order to achieve effectively the commitment of our Governments and peoples to equality, development and peace,

Conscious also that commitment must be inspired by the major outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the World Conference on Human Rights and the International Conference on Population and Development and can make a significant contribution to the World Summit on Social Development,

Conscious that policies must be relevant to the needs and concerns of women at all stages of their life cycle,

Recognizing that economic and social policies, both macro and micro, have gender- and age-differentiated impacts and that action must be taken to eliminate or adjust any adverse impacts,

Recognizing the importance of the inclusion of women with disabilities in all actions called for in this document,

Conscious that the achievement of peace is a basic prerequisite for steady and effective progress in the situation of women in war-torn areas, and willing to support the peace-making process in such areas of the ECE region,

Aware of different historical circumstances and situations facing women within the ECE region, particularly in the countries in transition, as well as of the burden resulting from those countries' transformation to democracy,

Believing that the challenges and opportunities created by the changing global political and economic environment must be met through equitable, effective, gender-sensitive economic and social policies at the national, regional and international levels,

Conscious that economic and social disparities exist also between the different regions of the world, and determined to reduce those disparities by self-reliant efforts, as well as by solidarity and cooperation,

Conscious that a gender perspective and greater focus on vulnerable groups such as rural women and those living in extreme poverty should be integrated into the mainstream of development assistance, both within the ECE and other regions,

Convinced that women of the ECE region living in developed and democratic countries where they have furthered their rights, also have duties towards the women who are fighting for rights, equality and democracy in other countries,

1. Declare that the first intergovernmental ECE Regional Preparatory Meeting ever organized for a United Nations World Conference on Women constitutes a unique opportunity for forging closer links among countries of the region in their policies and activities aimed at ensuring the advancement and empowerment of all women living in the region;

2. Commit our Governments to achieving, by the year 2000, a more equitable and sustainable society where women's knowledge, potential and contributions are recognized and taken fully into account in all

policy- and decision-making. Action to achieve such a society will be based on the following basic principles:

(a) The human rights of women are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights and must therefore be promoted, protected and realized at all stages of the life cycle - childhood, adolescence, adulthood and old age - and must further reflect the full diversity of women, recognizing that many women face additional barriers because of such factors as their race, language, ethnicity, culture, religion, sexual orientation, disability, socio-economic class or status as indigenous people, migrants, displaced people or refugees;

(b) The promotion of equality and partnership among women and men requires a more equitable sharing of authority and responsibilities in family life, work and society, as well as a more equitable sharing of economic and political power. Equal opportunities for women and men are needed for the realization of full human potential and thus the achievement of sustainable human development, democracy and peace;

(c) Partnership between women and men is the basis for a new gender contract based on equality which would entail a redistribution of domestic and family care, contribute to economic independence for women, reduce women's double workload and break down existing stereotypes of the roles of women and men;

(d) A new gender contract involves an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective into all relevant political, economic and social policy fields at the central, regional and local levels, so that before various decisions are taken in society, an analysis has already been made of the effects on women and men respectively. Such mainstreaming is crucial, not only in order to achieve equality between women and men but also to contribute to sustainable development and political, economic and social efficiency in the region;

(e) Fostering democracy and promoting equality between women and men are mutually reinforcing. The participation of women as fully fledged protagonists, on an equal footing with men, in decision-making in all areas of political, economic, social and cultural life, is a condition and prerequisite of a fully democratic society. Based on the respect for fundamental political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights, fostering and promoting equality between women and men enables the strengthening of women's conditions and status and participation at all levels of decision-making, which in turn is a prerequisite for the advancement of women;

(f) Solidarity for the empowerment of women within the region and with other societies is crucial for ensuring women's advancement and to enhancing their participation in the political, economic and social structures and institutions in all countries;

(g) Education and training which integrate a gender perspective are key to achieving equality for women and girls and must be a priority to ensure their effective and equal participation in society;

(h) Maintenance of peace and security at the global, regional and local levels, together with prevention of policies of aggression and ethnic cleansing and with resolution of armed conflicts, is crucial for the protection of the universal human rights of women and the girl child, as well as for the elimination of all forms of violence against them and of their use as a weapon of war. The achievement of peace is a precondition for any programme for women in areas and countries that are at war;

3. Adopt the Regional Platform for Action emanating from the High-level Regional Preparatory Meeting, by which, based on our statement of mission and major trends identified within the region, seven strategic objectives have been identified, derived from seven critical areas of concern;

4. Decide to establish, improve, maintain and strengthen national machineries at all levels in order to implement those strategic objectives;

5. Call on all other actors, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, the public and the private sector and research and academic circles to join forces in securing the implementation and subsequent evaluation of the strategic objectives contained in the Regional Platform for Action;

6. Call for maximum cooperation in mobilizing resources for the implementation of the strategic objectives;

7 Express readiness to provide assistance to countries in transition, taking into account their specific needs in the implementation of the strategic objectives;

8. Express our willingness and commitment to spare no efforts in implementing the priority actions set forth herein at the central, regional and local levels in our societies as well as to cooperate with the United Nations, other regional and international organizations and non-governmental organizations on implementation at the regional and international levels;

9. Trust that the Regional Platform for Action will contribute meaningfully to the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace.

I. STATEMENT OF MISSION

1. The basic objectives of the ECE High-level Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Fourth World Conference on Women will be as follows:

(a) To review and appraise the evolving status of women and gender relations in the ECE region, in the light of the major changes that have occurred at the regional and global levels;

(b) To appraise the human rights of women in the region, bearing in mind the universal and indivisible nature of all human rights, particularly as they relate to women;

(c) To assess in particular the impact of the political, economic, social and institutional changes on women and on their role both as beneficiaries of, and contributors to, the development of their societies and economies;

(d) To highlight both the major problems faced by women and the new opportunities for realizing their potential, particularly in the economies in transition, and to identify the remaining constraints to realizing that potential;

(e) To define a set of action-oriented guidelines and concrete measures aimed at improving the situation of women in all countries, particularly in countries in transition, and at overcoming the problems encountered and taking full advantage of emerging opportunities, thereby facilitating women's empowerment at all levels of society;

(f) To contribute to a strategy for development based on a partnership in support of equality between women and men in all parts of the world, taking into account the need for global, sustainable human development.

2. In order to meet these objectives effectively, the specific features of the ECE region need to be taken fully into consideration and properly addressed. Stretching over three continents, the region comprises 54 countries, including 24 economies in transition, characterized by disparities in size, population, cultural and historical background and levels of economic and social development. In a number of transition countries, women are the first to suffer from the negative effects of economic restructuring, resurgence of nationalism, as well as ethnic and other types of conflicts. Some of these countries face critical problems related to an unprecedented inflow of millions of refugees and displaced persons, women in particular. Account was taken of these disparities in defining the statement of mission and examining the regional framework. At the same time, the areas of concern and the strategic objectives outlined below are common to all ECE member States. These areas and objectives are deliberately selective in order to focus on those which are most relevant to the region and to allow for a more in-depth treatment. They form the basis for the priority actions that need to be undertaken during the coming years and which are governed by the basic principles embodied in the Preambular Declaration.

II. REGIONAL FRAMEWORK

3. The draft platform for action of the Fourth World Conference on Women notes that, "since the adoption of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, in 1985, the world has been experiencing a global process of restructuring of economic, social and cultural relationships. This restructuring process has had a profound impact, both positive and negative, on women". The major trends in the ECE region are briefly outlined below.

4. Women, including those with young children, have continued to increase their participation in the labour market, even during the recent recession. In some countries of the region, almost as many women as men are engaged in paid employment. This "feminization" of the labour force has contributed to economic growth and brought to many women a measure of economic and social independence. The number of women in decision-making has increased, particularly in national parliaments. In many parts of the region, national machineries for the advancement of women have been established and existing structures have been reinforced and made more visible. Many countries have introduced new legislation, or strengthened existing legislation, in order to eliminate discrimination against women, particularly in working life. Increased awareness of the importance of strengthening women's enjoyment of human rights can be noted, as well as increased attention to issues of equality between women and men in general.

5. Much, however, remains to be done before equality is achieved in the region. The present situation indicates that lingering effects of the recent recession in western Europe and North America, as well as the "transformation stress" in countries of eastern and central Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, have had a more adverse effect on women than on men in terms of equal access to employment, economic rewards, working and environmental conditions, social welfare and health care. In other parts of the region as well, there are signs pointing to a slower pace or even setbacks in the work of promoting equality.

6. Persistent unemployment and cuts in social expenditures are affecting incomes and living standards throughout the region. The degree of hardship varies considerably, but countries of Eastern and Central Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States are the hardest hit because of the compounded effects of the transition and the global economic crisis. That crisis has also gravely affected the most

disadvantaged groups in countries of western Europe and North America, thus contributing to the economic exclusion of women.

7. An increasing number of women are experiencing labour-related poverty. They are either excluded from the labour market altogether or employed in low-waged and low-skilled jobs with atypical contracts which place them in a situation of permanent economic insecurity. Women in most countries in transition, especially rural and immigrant women, as well as women over 40, are particularly hard hit by unemployment and they are often not eligible for pension. In addition, women with good qualifications must often accept jobs that do not utilize their full capacities. Women workers also face sexual harassment, which further circumscribes their employment opportunities. Unemployment has driven many women, especially in some countries in transition, into prostitution. Therefore Governments must fund safe support systems for women as well as training and retraining schemes aimed at creating employment opportunities.

8. Finally, the labour market in the region has not yet been organized in such a way that people can fulfil their obligations in the family, including those towards children, the elderly, the disabled and the ill. Women often have the double burden of two jobs, one in the workplace and one in the home, resulting in additional stress and fatigue, which have a number of effects, including on their health. This general deterioration in the employment situation, together with the decreased provision of social services in a number of countries of the region and their continuing scarcity in others, has contributed to the feminization of poverty and has a negative impact on women's physical and mental well-being, affecting in particular disadvantaged groups of women such as those suffering from disease, women with disabilities, indigenous women, single mothers, members of ethnic and racial minorities, migrant workers, refugee and displaced women and older women. Particular attention must be given to the health of those young women who are perpetually unemployed.

9. It thus appears that the opportunities opened by new technologies, more flexible production systems and the development of services have also created a number of obstacles that women are still facing. In all of the region's economies, women's jobs are clustered at the lower end of the labour market spectrum. However, a large number of women are university graduates with professional degrees. These women often earn less than their male counterparts. Consequently, their pensions are smaller. This problem is particularly severe in some countries in transition. Upward mobility and career prospects are limited and not in keeping with women's skills and education. In most parts of the region, the need to reconcile family responsibilities and work, paid or unpaid, outside the home is inadequately reflected in social infrastructure and the sharing between parents of parental and domestic tasks. Women have a double workload which hampers their full contribution to the economy. Women have taken on responsibilities in the labour market to a greater degree and at a faster pace than men have taken on responsibilities in the household, although in many parts of the region, among women and men alike, attitudes and values relating to gender roles have started to change.

10. More emphasis and resources should be placed on the education and empowerment of women to allow a stronger representation of women in decision-making and high level positions in both the public and the private sectors. The presence of women at senior levels in spheres that have real power to make or influence policy – politics, public bodies, business and finance, trade unions, media, academic and scientific institutions – is at best growing too slowly. In a number of countries it is actually regressing significantly.

11. The World Conference on Human Rights recognized that the human rights of women and the girl child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. The full and equal participation of women in political, civil, economic, social and cultural life, at the national, regional and

international levels, and the eradication of all forms of discrimination on grounds of sex are therefore priority objectives of the international community. In the ECE region, progress has been made to further develop national legislation and plans by subregional groupings to promote and safeguard the human rights of women and to provide an underpinning of equality between women and men in economic and public life.

12. Not all ECE countries, however, have ratified, implemented and enforced the existing conventions and other international instruments relating to equality and human rights of women, particularly the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. It appears also that some countries have removed the equality legislation previously adopted. The application of existing legislation remains insufficient in most countries of the region, and there is a gap between de jure and de facto equality, due in particular to lack of awareness by women and men alike, as well as to a lack of enforcement of constitutional law, civil, penal and commercial codes, and administrative rules and regulations and to a lack of commitment by political authorities. Also hindering the effective application of existing legislation are, for instance, discriminatory practices, under-representation of women in the justice system, gender bias in the justice system, insufficient information on existing rights and a deliberate intent to maintain the attitudes which perpetrate women's inequality.

13. Absence of the right of individual petition, and the large number of reservations that are contrary to the object and purpose of the Convention or which are otherwise incompatible with international treaty law, prevent the Convention from functioning effectively and hamper the actual achievement of equality between women and men.

14. Awareness and enforcement of legislation for the equal treatment of women and men calls for an appropriate institutional framework. In many countries of the region, the national machineries established to ensure the advancement of women through the formulation and monitoring of public policies, advocacy and the mobilization of support are still weak or are being cut back. Often, these national machineries are understaffed and marginalized in national government bodies, and their profile and power eroded as a result of a policy shift from equity principles to deficit reduction. In some countries such national machineries have not yet been established. Statistical systems in a number of countries do not provide adequate data and indicators disaggregated by sex. Such data are necessary for a complete analysis of gender aspects of the economic and social situation, to fix benchmarks and targets, to inform policies and legislation and to monitor the evolving situation.

15. The end of the Cold War has brought about new international political relationships, which have greatly reduced the threat of global war and promoted the peaceful resolution of many regional conflicts. At the same time, peace in many parts of the world, including in the ECE region, is being threatened by the resurgence of nationalism, racism and xenophobia, as well as by wars of aggression and ethnic and other types of conflict. The grave violations of the human rights of women, particularly in times of armed conflict and including murder, torture, systematic rape, forced pregnancy and forced abortion, and especially policies of so-called "ethnic cleansing", are unacceptable. These practices have created inter alia a mass flow of refugees and displaced persons, among whom women, adolescent girls and children constitute the majority.

16. The end of the Cold War and the growing interdependence among nations have determined the political, economic and social background of the region. The international community is moving towards a dynamic new approach to development – one which integrates the individual human dimension into the notion of security by identifying the well-being of people, rather than the current level of per capita national income, as the essence of development. Economic policies which increase the gross domestic product cannot be considered successful if they benefit the few while causing environmental degradation,

poverty and financial insecurity for the many. Concepts and values such as sustainability, human development, social development, gender-responsive development and women's rights as human rights, equality and social justice, are becoming increasingly central to the development debate. Development thinking has also shifted from viewing discrimination against women exclusively as a women's issue to seeing it as affecting the whole of society and constituting an obstacle to development.

17. Valuing women's own contribution to the economy and increasing their participation in decision-making bodies in all spheres of public life enables them to play a decisive role in the promotion and implementation of a renewed vision of development, in particular in the areas discussed below.

18. Women's participation in decision-making. Women's participation in decision-making has risen since the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies were adopted, as evidenced in such phenomena as the establishment or strengthening of national machineries; increased participation in political decision-making; increased awareness of human rights; and increased paid employment, which results in such structural changes as measures to combine women's work with their parental responsibilities.

19. Development. Development, in the broadest sense, involves securing peace, protecting the environment, securing social integration, achieving democracy and the empowerment of women, ensuring respect for human rights, and promoting a healthy and well-educated population. Economic growth should be accompanied by full employment, reduction of poverty, attention to the particular health risks of women's exposure to environmental hazards and improved income distribution through equal opportunities for both women and men. The policies and market imperfections that promote inefficient use of natural resources and environmental degradation constrain the management of the environment. Attention to these constraints is required to support women's valuable contributions to improving the environment, not only through their consumer decisions and household management, but also through their roles as economic actors in business, industry and agriculture.

20. Women's role in new development prospects. The distinction between national and international policies is fading, creating a need for a global approach to future development. Society should make greater and more creative use of women's skills and entrepreneurship as a major contribution to growth and general prosperity. There has been a lack of recognition of human resources from the central and eastern European countries in transition. The skills of women in these countries have made major contributions to the political, economic and social life of their respective countries, and their inputs should continue to be developed, supported and utilized. That women have this potential is clearly demonstrated by the increasing number of enterprises being set up by women in the ECE region.

21. Similarly, there has been some improvement within the region in women's role in the economy, although this trend varies greatly from country to country. Particularly in the market economies of western Europe and North America, the liberalization of trade and the greater freedom of movement, both of labour and capital, which resulted from the globalization of the economy and the development of new computer-based technologies has created additional jobs in the service sector, of which women have been major beneficiaries. At the same time, these gains are being partly offset by falling remuneration, deterioration of working conditions and the loss of jobs in female-dominated occupations in clerical and telecommunications sectors.

22. Gender impact. The impact of national and international economic and social policies on women and men must be taken into account from the earliest stages of formulation and throughout the implementation and evaluation process. The lessons drawn from a gender and development approach, as well as from countries which pursue gender-sensitive policy implementation strategies, should be used for

further developing methodologies and mechanisms and for mainstreaming gender concerns into economic and social policy.

23. The ECE economy and sustainable development. The ECE region plays a critical role in relation to other regions because of its political and economic impact on the world economy and therefore has a major role to play in the promotion of sustainable development. In fact, while all countries must be concerned with addressing sustainable patterns of production and consumption, the ECE region should take a lead in this regard. As set forth in the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21, adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, which includes Chapter 24 entitled "Global Action for Women Towards Sustainable and Equitable Development" as well as numerous other references to the important role of women, women have a vital role to play in environmental management and development and their full participation is therefore essential to achieving sustainable development.

III. CRITICAL AREAS OF CONCERN

24. Based on decision K (48) of the Economic Commission for Europe and the subsequent outline of the draft agenda for the Meeting, the main headings of which have been endorsed in decision J (49), seven critical areas of concern, of particular relevance to the ECE region, have been identified.

A. Insufficient promotion and protection of women's human rights

25. Despite the fact that the human rights of women are now recognized as an integral and inalienable part of human rights, international conventions and standards, particularly the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, have not yet been ratified by, or are not complied with in, all countries of the region. Equally serious is the fact that the human rights instruments are being undermined by those reservations which conflict with the object and purpose of the Convention. In addition, the Convention does not accord women the right of individual petition.

26. Although it is a duty of States, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems, to promote all human rights and fundamental freedoms, in some countries national laws still fail to conform to these conventions and standards and there is too often a lack of appropriate recourse, enforcement and protection mechanisms.

27. Human sexuality and gender relations are closely interrelated and together affect the ability of women and men to achieve and maintain sexual health and manage their reproductive lives. Equal relationships between women and men in matters of sexual relations and reproduction, including full respect for the physical integrity of the human body, require mutual respect and willingness to accept responsibility for the consequences of sexual behaviour. In this respect, women's reproductive rights[1] and sexual rights are often not respected and sometimes not yet recognized.

28. All forms of violence against women, in public as well as private life, although they have entered public debate and are condemned both as crimes in national legislation and as a violation of the human rights of women, still affect too many women in all countries of the ECE region.

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[1]Based on the Programme of Action adopted by the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, September 1994).

29. The serious situation of women in war-torn and occupied areas, where they are often victims of torture, systematic rape, other forms of violence and violations of their human rights and fundamental freedoms, requires special attention and concrete action.

30. Refugee women are in urgent need of gender-sensitive protection in terms of their right to seek asylum, family reunification requests and integration into the country of asylum. Aid and assistance are needed in finding durable solutions to their plight and in responding to the specific problems faced by them. Displaced women who do not qualify for refugee status and who are in some cases outside their country are also vulnerable and need international protection. Refugee and displaced women have the right to a guarantee of safe and protected return to their homes.

31. Documented migrant women are also in need of gender-sensitive protection in responding to the specific problems faced by them and their legal integration in the country of migration. Undocumented migrant women are vulnerable to abuses of their basic human rights and to forms of exploitation such as prostitution and are therefore also in need of gender-sensitive protection.

B. Feminization of poverty

32. Women face a growing risk of poverty as a result of current labour market trends and changes in the composition of the family. Increasingly, they are more likely than men to be the "working poor" or living in absolute poverty, occupying the bulk of low-level and low-paid jobs or working in atypical employment. Women are also more likely than men to be parents bringing up children single-handed or to be elderly persons living alone. The causes of poverty go hand in hand with the rise in female-headed households, which are often among the poorest of the poor in a cycle of poverty that continues from grandmother to granddaughter. Poverty eradication strategies, which are primarily concerned with the monetized economy and tend to target men directly as breadwinners, have often failed to take into account the differential impact of economic policies on women and men and have therefore had limited success in improving women's situation in such important areas as housing. Special attention should be given to the severe problem of housing, which numerous women heads of households are facing.

33. A number of factors specifically affect women and should be taken into account in the treatment of poverty. The most disadvantaged groups of women tend to be rural women in isolated areas and poor urban women – in particular women who head households, elderly women, girls and adolescents, teenage mothers, unemployed women, migrants and immigrants, refugees and displaced women, indigenous women, members of ethnic and racial minorities, prostitutes and victims of sexual exploitation, who are often adolescents and street youth, disabled women, those affected by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) or women addicted to drugs or alcohol. In too many countries of the region, the social welfare systems do not take sufficient account of the specific consequences of those phenomena for women, and there is a tendency to scale back the services provided by such systems. These disadvantaged groups usually have limited access, if any, to such resources as education, training, child care, capital, technology or land, which would enable them to obtain employment or income.

C. Insufficient awareness of women's contribution to the economy in the context of sustainable development and insufficient promotion of their potential

34. In some countries of the region, the recession has resulted in a slowdown or even a decline in women's participation in the economy. In a large number of countries, however, women's share in the labour force and their contribution to the economy continue to increase, although more and more women cannot find full-time work or are under pressure to stay at home. A clear shift from "one-breadwinner" to "two-breadwinner" societies can also be discerned in many countries.

35. In the region as a whole, however, women and men continue to have unequal access to economic resources. The fact that women's income, which derives mostly from wages, is on average lower than men's is due to the horizontally and vertically segregated labour market. More women than men work part-time, which also affects their wages.

36. Women and men are also found in different sectors and levels of working life, with women often working in professions and positions where the pay is lower. Furthermore, pay differentials prevail when educational background, experience in working life, etc., are taken into account. Equal pay for equal work and work of equal value is not yet a reality in most parts of the region.

37. In addition, working conditions in most countries are not adapted to the fact that in a large number of families, both partners are working, even when the children are small. Working life must be adapted to the needs of families with children. Another, related, obstacle to women's full participation in the economy is the fact that many men do not take their share of responsibility for housework and child care. Furthermore, since women's unpaid work has not been sufficiently recognized as a major contribution to the economy, it is often ignored in the analysis and formulation of economic and social policies.

38. There are also considerable differences in women's and men's access and opportunities to exert power over economic structures in their societies. In most parts of the region, women are virtually absent from, or poorly represented in, economic decision-making, including the formulation of policies dealing with the distribution of economic resources, tax systems and rules governing pay, among others. Since it is often within the framework of such policies that individual men and women make their decisions, inter alia, on how to divide their time between paid and unpaid work, the actual development of these economic structures and policies has a direct impact on women's and men's access to economic resources, their economic power and consequently the degree of equality between them, at the individual and family level as well as in society as a whole.

39. There is growing recognition that economic and political reforms can have a different effect on women and men. Much, however, remains to be done in order to achieve increased awareness and recognition in this field.

40. Women have an essential role to play in sustainable development as equal participants in key decision-making at all levels and in the development of sustainable and ecologically sound lifestyles, consumption and production patterns, and approaches to natural resources management. Their potential, both within the family and in their economic and civic responsibilities, to contribute to the management, protection and conservation of the environment, is generally underutilized.

41. Research and data gaps exist concerning the specific effects of environmental degradation on women. Women have different susceptibilities to environmental hazards, and the consequences of exposure to a given hazard may differ for men and women because of differing physiologies and nutritional needs. Data gathering and research will enable environmental and health-care policies to take gender differences into account.

42. Women in the region have made contributions by promoting social awareness of ecologically sound lifestyles, consumption patterns and waste and natural resources management. However, they are not equal partners in environmental planning and policy-making in most countries of the region.

D. Insufficient de facto gender equality in employment and economic opportunity and insufficient policies and measures to reconcile employment and family responsibilities

43. While generally decreasing on a global level, horizontal gender segregation in employment is still the predominant pattern in most sectors of the economy. Because of women's lack of access to senior and managerial positions, vertical segregation persists in most sectors of activity, leading to a concentration of women in repetitive, low-skilled and low-paid work.

44. Such segregation is due in part, in some countries, to unequal access by women to opportunities in education and training in science and technology, as well as to gender-stereotyped socialization and stereotyped behaviour in education and vocational training.

45. Women in many ECE countries are disproportionately affected by unemployment, as job losses are concentrated in "traditional" sectors, in labour-intensive activities in the whole region, and also in heavy industry in some countries of eastern and central Europe. Women are also affected by the restructuring of the economy and the absence of job creation in the public sector as a result of budgetary constraints.

46. Economic restructuring, particularly efforts to increase labour market flexibility, has led to an increase in non-standard work arrangements in a large number of ECE countries, mainly affecting women, their working conditions and their employment security, including their fringe benefits, total earnings and retirement income.

47. The recession and other economic problems have led in many countries to a rise in prostitution and jobs entailing sexual exploitation. Because this phenomenon, which affects the human rights of women, is often international, more international efforts and cooperation are needed to prevent its expansion.

48. Gaps between male and female wages for work of equal value are still frequent in the region, both in the private and the public sectors, and are increasing in some sectors and areas, partly because the employment traditionally undertaken by women is not yet properly recognized and properly valued.

49. Measures to ensure adequate working conditions for women, such as providing occupational safety and health, are still insufficient in a number of sectors in some countries.

50. Sexual harassment and other forms of violence in the workplace constitute a problem faced by women in the labour force in the region and are a major issue of concern.

51. Owing to the stereotyped perception of women's role primarily as wives and mothers, a life-cycle approach to employment is still missing in almost all countries of the region. The reality is that due to their role as wives and mothers, women tend to enter, leave and re-enter the labour force periodically more often than men. Nonetheless, education, training and retraining schemes designed to increase women's access to jobs remain insufficiently developed. These schemes often direct women to a limited number of fields where career opportunities are limited.

52. In some cases, the education of girls frequently does not prepare them for employment. Education and training policies have not been sufficiently adapted to the changing patterns of demand in the labour market and do not sufficiently benefit women. There may be increased discrimination against women in view of new deregulation policies.

53. Since the recent recession in most ECE countries, there has been a tendency not to develop further policies and facilities for working parents that would enable women and men to reconcile career and

family both through equal access to employment and through equal sharing of domestic, parental and family responsibilities.

54. The once prevalent stereotype that kept women in the home and men in the professional world no longer corresponds to the reality and life plans of most people. Hence, men must be encouraged to participate more actively in family tasks and women given more opportunities to pursue a fulfilling career and to take a full and equal role in public life.

55. Specific measures such as maternity leave, parental leave for both parents, reintegration of women workers in the workforce after childbearing, retraining where necessary, improvement in child care and care for the elderly and other dependent adults are in existent or still insufficient in many countries of the region.

56. In some countries, family policies do not sufficiently take into account the equal legal status of women within the family and women's need for economic independence. Income tax systems, especially where they are not based on individuals, and social security systems do not yet meet such requirements in most countries of the region.

57. Women around the world share the common problem of inadequate attention to their health needs, throughout all phases of their life cycle. The high incidence of induced abortions in many areas of the ECE region testifies to an inadequate access to high-quality family planning services, and even in cases where abortions are not against the law, they are not always safe.

58. A life-cycle approach to issues of women's health (physical and emotional well-being) is needed, one that adopts principles through which health security can be ensured for children, adolescents, adult women and older women alike.

E. Insufficient participation of women in public life

59. There is generally a gap between the de jure and de facto situation of women in terms of political rights, especially concerning their opportunities for standing for election and having access to higher positions in political decision-making bodies.

60. Women continue to be under-represented in parliamentary, legislative and regulatory bodies, as well as in the judiciary.

61. Women are also gravely under-represented in most government and ministerial functions, as well as in executive bodies at the provincial, local and municipal levels, being, however, often over-represented in low to mid-level government jobs, frequently in part-time positions. In most ECE countries, women remain a minority at the senior and top managerial levels of public administration, the productive and financial sectors (both public and private), trade unions and employers' associations.

62. The poverty gap between women and men makes it even harder to promote equal access to public life by impoverished women, who are at an inherent disadvantage because of their cultural backgrounds and lack of education and professional experience. As a result, they have insufficient access to the power bases of society and cannot adequately influence the process of change and development under way in their societies.

63. Negative media portrayal of women reinforces outdated perceptions, thus contributing to gender inequality. Women do not have sufficient access to positions where they can exert influence on media

policies and programming. The most disadvantaged groups among them, especially those socially marginalized and belonging to minorities, have little access to power structures in the public sphere.

64. Whilst women's organizations have been successful in increasing the effective mobilization and empowerment of women, the validity of their positive contribution is not always sufficiently recognized by Governments and political authorities, and they are not always adequately represented in consultative bodies.

F. Insufficient statistical systems, databases and methodologies to inform policies and legislation and to secure equal treatment of women and men

65. Most national statistical systems do not yet reflect the increasing concern for collecting, analysing, disseminating and updating data disaggregated by sex. This leads inter alia to an underestimation of women's participation in the labour force and in other spheres of society, to a lack of visibility of their domestic, household, informal and related activities as well as to a lack of measurement of the disparities between their input and the outcome they can benefit from, as full beneficiaries. Statistics should be compiled in such a way as to help in the evaluation of the present economic situation of women.

66. National, regional and international statistical institutions still have insufficient knowledge of how to present the issues related to equal treatment of women and men in the economic and social spheres. In particular, there is insufficient use of existing databases and methodologies in the important sphere of decision-making. This hampers the development and fostering of innovative policies for the advancement of women and does not allow for a consistent and continuous monitoring process of existing policies.

G. Insufficient intra- and interregional networking and cooperation on the advancement of women

67. In an increasingly global economy, partnership and exchange of experience demand global solidarity and commitment to improving women's position in all regions.

68. Regional cooperation and assistance have not yet sufficiently integrated gender concerns into the planning and implementation stages of development programmes. Gender-specific programmes directed at the most affected groups of women in countries with economies in transition, for instance, have not yet been developed.

69. There is still an overall lack of awareness of gender concerns both inside and outside the region. Both international trade and development cooperation policies can have a negative impact on the status of women in other regions. Women still do not take part in decision-making on these international policies on an equal footing with men. The need to support institution-building of representative women's organizations and of national machineries responsible for gender issues in partner countries has not been adequately addressed.

70. Support for local activities initiated by and for women in countries in transition has not been sufficiently forthcoming, either from governmental or non-governmental sources.

IV. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES DERIVED FROM THE CRITICAL AREAS OF CONCERN, AND ACTION TO BE TAKEN

A. Promote, achieve and protect the full realization of all women's human rights

71. Governments should give priority to promoting and protecting the full and equal enjoyment by women and men of all human rights and fundamental freedoms without distinction of any kind such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinions, national or social origins, property, birth or other status. Governments should make education and information on women's human rights widely available and should publicize the existence of national, regional and international mechanisms for seeking redress when these rights are violated.

72. Governments are called upon, if they have not yet done so, to ratify – preferably before the Fourth World Conference on Women but at least by the year 2000 – all relevant international human rights treaties, particularly the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and to implement the recommendations made in the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. Governments are urged to withdraw reservations that are contrary to the object and purpose of the Convention or that are otherwise incompatible with international treaty law and formulate any reservations as precisely and narrowly as possible. The treaty-monitoring bodies should continue their work of examining and finding more effective means to address the question of reservations of that kind. As called for in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights the Commission on the Status of Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) should quickly examine the possibility of introducing the right to petition through the preparation of an optional protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Steps should be taken to ensure that CEDAW has adequate meeting time and the necessary resources to perform its functions under the Convention.

73. Governments are urged to implement fully all international human rights obligations and ensure women's equality before the law by adopting measures that ensure gender equality and the elimination of gender bias in law and in practice, inter alia by providing an effective legal framework to support claims to equal rights. Measures should be taken by Governments or other competent bodies to ensure that (a) public officials at international, national and local levels receive training on women's human rights; (b) women's access to the justice system is improved by providing legal assistance; (c) judicial personnel, police, and public officials at the community level receive training throughout their professional careers enabling them to identify and appropriately address violations of women's human rights. In this connection, gender-sensitive educational curricula are essential for boys and girls at every level of the educational process to ensure that they develop in an environment marked by respect for equality and equal opportunities. Special attention should be paid to the eradication of women's illiteracy.

74. Governments should guarantee the full enjoyment of all rights, as set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights by women activists and non-governmental organizations working peacefully for the promotion of women's human rights.

75. Governments should take urgent action to combat and eliminate all forms of violence against women in public and private life, perpetrated by the State or by private persons, including sexual violence and sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and trafficking of girls, adolescents and women, and government- and state-sponsored human rights violations and violence against women such as torture, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, extrajudicial killings, and disappearances of women.

Governments should take steps to eliminate gender bias in the administration of justice. Governments should promote increased awareness of the links between violence against women, the lack of equality between individual women and men as well as between women and men in general in society. Governments are urged to observe the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and all other human rights instruments addressing these issues by reviewing existing legislation and taking effective measures, including measures directed at the perpetrators. Governments should also promote education and training for relevant personnel within the judiciary, the health and medical sectors and for social workers. More accurate age- and gender-specific data on all forms of violence against women, as defined in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, are urgently needed.

76. Governments should actively support the work of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women appointed by the Commission on Human Rights and ensure that the position is adequately funded. They should also cooperate with the mechanisms of the Commission on Human Rights to ensure that the rights of women are taken into account. These include the special rapporteurs on torture, extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, religious intolerance and racism; the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography; the Secretary-General's Special Representative on the internally displaced; the working groups on disappearances and arbitrary detention; and the special rapporteurs appointed on particular countries. Governments should include full information on the situation of women and the girl child in response to enquiries from any of these mechanisms.

77. Violence against women and violation of the human rights of women in situations of armed conflicts and foreign occupation, such as murder, rape, sexual abuse— including sexual slavery and forced pregnancy— torture, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, disappearances and arbitrary detentions, requires particularly effective and urgent reactions by all concerned at the national, regional and international levels. Particular attention should be paid to sexual violence against uprooted women and girls employed as a method of persecution in systematic campaigns of terror and intimidation, and forcing members of a particular ethnic, cultural or religious group to flee their homes. Governments are urged to uphold standards set out in international humanitarian and human rights law and to prevent all forms of violence. Perpetrators of such crimes should be punished and such practices and violations immediately stopped.

78. National, regional and international mechanisms of accountability should focus particular attention on violations of women's rights and should exert every effort to ensure that all those individuals involved in the perpetration of such violations are brought to justice in accordance with internationally recognized principles of due process. All these mechanisms, and especially those which address massive, systematic or profound violations of women's rights, such as the United Nations Ad Hoc War Crimes Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, are encouraged to employ individuals with experience in prosecuting gender-specific crimes and to ensure that all investigative and prosecutorial personnel are trained in issues specific to such crimes. In this context the Meeting welcomes efforts to establish an international criminal court.

79. Education in international human rights and humanitarian law should be given to members of national and international armed forces on a routine and continuing basis. They should also be reminded of, and sensitized to the fact that rape is a crime and that they should respect the rights and dignity of all women, at all times, both on and off duty.

80. Governments should take urgent action to combat and eliminate violence against women resulting from harmful traditional or customary practices, cultural prejudices and/or religious extremism. They are

also urged to prohibit female genital mutilation wherever it exists and to give vigourous support to efforts among non-governmental and community organizations and religious institutions to eliminate such practices.

81. Governments are encouraged to implement the recommendations contained in the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. Special attention needs to be paid to ensuring non-discrimination and the equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by women and girls with disabilities, including their access to information and services in the field of violence against women as well as their active participation in and economic contribution to all aspects of society.

82. Governments should take measures aimed at promoting and protecting the rights of refugee and displaced women. These measures should include the ratification of, accession to and implementation of all relevant international instruments. They should also disseminate and implement the Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women and the Guidelines on Evaluation and Care of Victims of Trauma and Violence or similar guidance in close cooperation with refugee women, in all sectors of refugee programmes. Procedures for the processing of asylum applications for women asylum seekers should be developed, recognizing that women and men often experience persecution differently. The procedures should ensure particular sensitivity to those claimants who might have been subjected to sexual violence.

83. Special measures must be taken to end violence against and exploitation of migrant women. Particular attention should be paid to violence against female migrant workers as well as women, adolescents and children affected by the trafficking of persons, especially for purposes of prostitution, other commercial sex work and domestic labour.

84. Special measures should be adopted to eliminate trafficking in women and to assist women and children victims of sex trade, sexual violence, forced prostitution and forced labour, with special attention to migrant women. Countries of origin and recipient countries should enforce existing legislation in order to protect the rights of women and girl victims and to sanction the offenders. Specific actions should be developed at the intergovernmental level to prevent further abuse, including the dismantling of international networks of trafficking. Special measures for the social, medical and psychological care of these victims should be designed based on cooperation between Governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

85. Governments should comply with human rights standards and communicate with non-governmental organizations and the relevant United Nations institutions and mechanisms for the adoption, application and monitoring of conventions, norms and standards aimed at promoting and safeguarding the full and equal enjoyment by women of their human rights.

86. Governments and non-governmental organisations should, as appropriate, promote equal relationships between women and men in matters of sexual relations and reproduction. Governments should ensure the implementation of the right of all human persons to full respect of the physical integrity of the human body. In this respect, Governments should take action to ensure that women's reproductive rights[2] and sexual rights are fully recognized and respected.

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[2] Based on the Programme of Action adopted by the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, September 1994).

B. Promote the eradication of women's poverty

87. Governments should identify those groups of women which are most affected by poverty and institute measures to address that problem. Programmes to alleviate, reduce and eliminate poverty must achieve a number of objectives: access to productive assets, basic public services and social assistance at the relevant minimum income level where appropriate, as well as the provision of goods and services to the most disadvantaged groups who cannot provide for themselves. Anti-poverty and employment programmes should establish, where appropriate, food-market policies to improve the access of women-headed and women-maintained households to food supplies.

88. Women as heads of households and families must be especially supported economically in order to reduce the large number of poor women.

89. Structural adjustment policies should take into account the effect of their implementation on women and also directly respond to the role of women in the economy. Gender impact analysis should be undertaken in the course of implementing such policies. Where the gender impact analysis reveals that the policies may have a differential negative impact on women, the policies should be adjusted to address that impact, or supplementary programmes should be established adequately to alleviate the burden imposed on women. When developing structural adjustment policies, the provisions of the Commonwealth Ottawa Declaration on Women and Structural Adjustment and the findings of the OECD Expert Group Report entitled "Shaping Structural Change: The Role of Women" may be useful as guidelines.

90. Governments, through their representatives on the governing boards of international financial institutions, should promote the application of gender impact analysis in the lending activities of these agencies. Governments are encouraged to ensure representation of women on the boards of directors of these institutions.

91. International financial institutions should make an overall commitment to gender equity through their policy instruments, operations and programmes. They should be encouraged to promote gender equity through staffing, skills, training and representation of women at all levels of these institutions.

92. Concrete measures for development cooperation should be formulated to improve the political, economic and social position of women within international development aid programmes. Women should be given more attention, or at least treated equally with men, in development assistance.

93. To improve the political, economic and social position of women, development cooperation policies and programmes within the ECE region and with other regions, should be gender-sensitive and include a larger number of women in the decision-making process. They should increase women's economic and social security and their access to such resources as credit, land and basic social services. Specific focus should be placed on vulnerable groups in rural and urban areas, particularly women living in poverty.

94. Gender analysis, including statistics, should be used systematically to identify the gender-specific impact and implications of economic, political and social reforms and policies, including international trade agreements. In many instances the gender analysis should be further broken down into age-specific categories and the outcome of the gender analysis incorporated in decision-making processes. A systematic gender analysis of the causes and consequences of poverty should be developed to identify those categories of women that are most affected. Efficient systems are needed for monitoring potentially

harmful impacts so that policies can be redesigned as required. These should be developed with the active participation of Governments and non-governmental organizations.

95. Governments should develop policy measures to integrate or reintegrate poor women and socially marginalized women into productive employment and the economic mainstream, including women who do not qualify for retirement or unemployment benefits or child care because of the non-standard nature of their former work. Such measures might include counselling, job training, appropriate education and re-education, placement and supportive services.

96. A set of coherent nationwide policies needs to be promoted by Governments to address the various factors which prevent the most disadvantaged groups of women who live in poverty from enjoying their basic economic, social and human rights. Such policies should be aimed at improving the situation faced inter alia by rural and elderly women, adolescent women, teenage mothers, street youth, migrants, refugee and displaced women, women belonging to ethnic minorities, women heads of households in extreme poverty, persecuted women, women with disabilities, women with HIV infection and women affected by drug or alcohol abuse.

97. Governments should direct special efforts to the needs of women displaced by natural and man-made disasters.

98. Governments should pay particular attention to refugee and displaced women fleeing persecution and armed conflict. Equitable access to and participation with men in decision-making on durable solutions (repatriation, integration and resettlement) should be provided. Programmes recognizing the specific reception and integration needs of female refugees, as well as the reception needs of asylum seekers also need to be promoted, along with gender-sensitive training of assistance personnel at all levels.

99. Governments should take measures to recognize the foreign qualifications of immigrant and refugee women to enable their full integration into the labour force.

100. All parties involved in the development process, including academic institutions and non-governmental organizations, must be mobilized to improve the effectiveness of anti-poverty programmes directed towards the poorest and most disadvantaged groups of women. Women themselves should be involved at all stages of the preparation, implementation and evaluation of such programmes. However, Governments should not abrogate their responsibility for providing for social well-being by shifting social responsibility to non-governmental organizations and women.

C. Strengthen and promote the recognition of women's full contribution to their national economies and to sustainable development

101. In order to fully realize equality between women and men in their contribution to the economies of the ECE region, active efforts are required for recognizing equal appreciation and influence in society of the work, experience, knowledge and values of both women and men.

102. Governments should:

(a) Where necessary, undertake legislative and administrative reforms to give women full and equal rights with men to economic resources, including access to credit, title to property, asset holdings, inheritance and equal access to natural and economic resources and to labour and zoning laws;

(b) Promote increased awareness and recognition of women's and men's unequal access to economic resources and their different possibilities for exerting power in economic decision-making. They should, where appropriate, undertake studies and analyses of the number of women and men taking part in economic decision-making as well as women's and men's access to economic resources. They should also promote the integration of a gender perspective in all economic decision-making;

(c) Review national income taxation systems, as well as social security systems, with a view to placing individual women and men on an equal footing;

(d) Make visible the unremunerated contributions of women to the economy and, where appropriate, take them into account in the formulation and implementation of economic and social policies as well as in the data on which such policies are based;

(e) Recognize that society has a collective responsibility for the care of children in partnership with parents and provide sufficient support in the area of child care;

(f) Ensure adequate research to assess how and to what extent women are particularly susceptible or exposed to environmental hazards. In some cases, this may include research and data collection on specific groups of women, particularly low-income and minority women;

(g) Ensure that women have access to information and education, including in the environmental sciences and technology, thus providing an adequate basis for participation in environmental decisions affecting their health, food security and safety;

(h) Act to reduce risks to women from identified environmental hazards in the home, at work and in other environments, including through appropriate applications of clean technologies and by exercising the precautionary principle as agreed to in the Rio Declaration;

(i) Facilitate opportunities for women to participate in environmental decision-making at all levels;

(j) Take measures to integrate women's concerns and a gender perspective in the design and implementation of, inter alia, environmentally sound and sustainable energy and resource management mechanisms, production techniques, consumption patterns and infrastructure development in rural and urban areas;

(k) Acknowledge the valuable contribution to sustainable development that women of the region make through their daily consumer decisions and fully involve women in all aspects of policies designed to research and promote sustainable consumption and production patterns.

103. Measures to include women in the promotion of sustainable development should be taken both in the private sector and at the policy level in public administration. Special attention should be paid to low-income, ethnic minority and indigenous women and economic sectors where women predominate, including many small-scale production activities.

104 Women should be ensured equal opportunities of access and exercise of new jobs resulting from new structures and new technology as well as jobs developed within the health, day-care, elder-care and other sectors in order to improve women's living conditions.

105. Particular attention and recognition should be given to the role and special situation of women living in rural areas and those working in the agricultural sector. Positive action should be taken to

provide them with appropriate training thus enabling them to increase their participation in the sustainable development and modernization of this sector. Women, especially women heads of small and medium-sized enterprises in the agricultural sector, should be provided equal access to land, productive resources, credit, development programmes and cooperative structures.

D. Promote equal treatment between women and men workers and the harmonization of work and family responsibilities

1. Employment and earnings

106. Rethinking employment policies s necessary in order to integrate the gender perspective and to draw attention to a wider range of opportunities as well as to address any negative gender implications of current patterns of work and employment. Major shifts in employment policies need to:

(a) Ensure that all macro- and micro-economic policies are subjected to a gender impact analysis and that results of the analysis are recognized and acted upon;

(b) Attach high priority to the formulation of economic policies which have a positive impact on the employment of women workers;

(c) Broaden the range of employment opportunities for women, including support of entrepreneurial activities and non-traditional occupations;

(d) Encourage and assist the creation of a greater number of jobs in all sectors of activity without gender segregation and with an appropriate and equitable valuation of such jobs;

(e) Reconsider the concept of a threefold division of the life cycle, i.e., education, work and retirement, taking into account the interelationships among them as well as domestic, parental, elder-care and family responsibilities of workers of both sexes;

(f) Fully integrate the principle of non-discrimination between women and men in their equal access to and utilization of social security.

107. Efforts should be made jointly by States, employers, employees' organizations and women's organizations, according to their respecive responsibilities, to eliminate occupational segregation through, for instance, increased access of women to highly skilled jobs and senior managerial positions. Efforts should be increased to provide on-the-job career development and, with regard to traditionally female-dominated professions, to upgrade salaries, improve working conditions and enhance career development and career opportunities.

108. Special measures need to be adopted to provide young women with professional opportunities, in particular to widen such opportunities and training, and to promote non-traditional careers for women.

109. Governments should take the necessary measures, such as implementing and enforcing legislation, to ensure that gender discrimination is removed from working life, particularly concerning the hiring, training and promoting of employees, the terms and benefits of employment, sexual and racial harassment, the direction of work and the termination of employment. Special measures need to be implemented to deal with the multiple discriminations faced by women belonging to racial and ethnic minorities and by disabled, indigenous and migrant women.

110. Full- and part-time work should be freely chosen by women and men on an equal basis. It is important to ensure appropriate protection for atypical workers in terms of access to employment, working conditions and social security.

111. Legislation and regulations related to labour rights and protection may need to be examined and amended - including wages and working hours, social benefits and other terms and conditions - to ensure that they apply as appropriate to part-time and other non-standard workers, and also to ensure that women and men have access to the same kind of benefits, especially women working in the informal sector and in rural areas.

112. Social policy schemes should also be amended to take into account demographic changes - ageing of the population, the changing age distribution in birth rates, the increase in single-parent families and the increase of reconstituted families - which have a significant impact on the changing roles of mothers and fathers.

113. Governments, as well as employers' and employees' associations and women's organizations, should increase their efforts to close the gap between women's and men's pay and take steps to implement the principle of equal pay for equal work and work of equal value, in particular through strengthening legislation, including compliance with international labour standards such as International Labour Organisation (ILO) No. 100 (1951) in this respect, and through clear and effective corresponding enforcement methods. Job evaluation schemes that include criteria typical of women's work should be encouraged. Precise corresponding enforcement methods have to ensure proper access to justice for women who have been discriminated against in the labour market.

2. Working conditions of women in the workplace

114. Given that working conditions in the labour market are to a certain extent adapted to the needs of men, measures should be taken to end discrimination in the workplace, thereby ensuring equality of working conditions between women and men, especially regarding age, marital status, health and safety. Particular attention should be paid to pregnant and lactating women at the workplace.

115. It is essential that protection of women's reproductive health not be used as a basis or justification for discriminatory treatment. Health and safety standards must be adapted to protect pregnant women and women's and men's reproductive systems.

116. Effective measures should be taken to ensure pregnant women and women on maternity leave equal treatment in the labour market.

117. Measures should be taken by governments, employees, trade unions and other relevant parties to eliminate sexual and racial harassment and all forms of violence in the workplace. Public awareness has to be raised and further legislation and enforcement measures should be adopted in this respect.

118. Union's officials elected to represent women need to be given job protection in connection with the discharge of their functions.

3. Education and training for women

119. Education and training are important keys to achieving gender equality and women's economic independence and must be priority concerns when distributing resources. Governments, educational authorities, other educational and academic institutions and the social partners should take measures to

integrate a gender perspective in all education and training, including in curricula, tuitional methods, teacher training and educational material in order to encourage and support women, men, girls and boys to make informed educational and vocational choices that are based on individual capabilities, interests and concerns and not on gender-biased traditions.

120. Governments, in cooperation with employers, other social partners and relevant parties such as women's organisations, should develop education and training and retraining policies to ensure that women can acquire a wide range of skills to meet new demands. In particular, policies are needed to ensure basic education, to diversify vocational and technical training for women and to increase women's access to education in science, mathematics, engineering, information technology and high technology, as well as management training.

121. Information training and retraining systems, academic education and support schemes directly targeted to women and girls, taking into consideration the special needs, they might have, need to be established to ensure that they can benefit from the new job opportunities opened by economic restructuring, particularly in the financial and services sectors, new technologies and in enterprise development through the creation of small and medium-sized enterprises.

122. Measures should be taken to ensure equal access of women to ongoing training in the workplace so as to upgrade skills and promote career development. Special regard should be given to the training of single parents as well as to women re-entering the labour market after an extended temporary exit from employment owing to family responsibilities, using the experience and skills acquired outside their professional life as a basis for developing additional professional and academic qualifications. Women who have been displaced by new forms of production or by retrenchment should also have access to retraining facilities in order to maximize their ability to re-enter the labour market. Such training and retraining schemes should take into consideration such issues as the development of issues motivation and self-confidence.

123. Government should ensure access to education and training at all proper levels for adult women with little or no education and for migrant, refugee and displaced women to improve their work opportunities. Women and girls with disabilities should be given equal opportunities to the same education and training as others in accordance with the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities.

124. Gender stereotypes with regard to professional activity should be eradicated through appropriate curricula and teaching material in education and training and media efforts. Women's studies, teaching and gender research should be supported and developed in higher education and integrated in curricula and teachers training.

125. Girls should be encouraged to pursue a vigourous academic and technical curriculum in order to widen their future opportunities. To this end, professional school counselling, free of gender stereotypes, should be made available.

126. School curricula should reflect the contributions and role of women in society and include basic information on legal and media literacy, women's human rights, women's sexuality, sex education and family planning measures and other aspects related to the reproductive health of women.

127. Within the framework of regional cooperation, adequate attention should be given to providing technical assistance and advisory services and training and retraining connected with the transition to the market economy for women in countries in transition.

4. Access of women to entrepreneurship

128. Women's self-employment and development of small enterprises should be promoted and supported. Women's right of access to credit on appropriate terms should be equal to that of men and should be strengthened through the scaling-up of institutions dedicated to promoting women's entrepreneurship, including non-traditional and mutual credit schemes as well as innovative linkages with financial institutions.

129. Government should consider measures to support women entrepreneurs, such as the provision of maternity leave and/or other benefits.

130. Governments should also ensure that policies and regulations do not discriminate against small enterprises run by women.

131. Governments, both at the national and local levels, should enhance rural women's income-generating potential by facilitating their access to and control over productive resources, land property rights and development programmes.

132. Governments and community organizations should be encouraged to establish loan pools for women entrepreneurs, drawing on successful small-scale cooperative models.

133. NGOs should increase their efforts to provide networking arrangements for entrepreneurial women, including opportunities for the monitoring of inexperienced women by the more experienced.

5. Reconciliation of work and family responsibilities

134. Governments should develop programmes, policies and other initiatives aimed at creating conditions favourable to the establishment of a new gender contract with a view to changing attitudes, practices and structures regarding work and family care responsibilities.

135. Responsible governmental bodies should develop policies for the provision of affordable and accessible quality care for children and other dependants, taking into account the needs of all workers – women as well as men: full-time, part-time, shift workers, etc.

136. Measures should be taken to encourage men to assume full responsibility as equal partners in the work with home, children and elder care.

137. Through appropriate legislation, incentives and/or encouragement, Governments should ensure adequate opportunities for women and men to take parental leave and receive parental benefits.

138. The organization of work should enable women and men to combine work and domestic, parental, elder care and family responsibilities.

139. Temporary exits from employment, the provision of transferable employment benefits and arrangements for modifying working hours without sacrificing employees' prospects of development and advancement at work and in careers should be made possible through appropriate measures involving relevant governmental bodies and employers' and employees' associations.

140. Other key measures to reconcile work and family life are: changes in tax and social security systems; provision of adequate child care services – child minders, crèches, kindergartens, after-school

programmes, school canteens; appropriate organization of timetables, safe transportation for children, provisions for mothers to breastfeed; parental leave and leave for other reasons, and organization of care for the elderly and other dependent adults. These measures can be designed and implemented through various innovative forms of cooperation between the State (central and local Governments), the private sector and local communities.

141. Increased sharing of roles and responsibilities within the family should be promoted through innovative media campaigns and school and community education programmes which emphasize gender equality and non-stereotyped gender roles of women and men within the family so that women may participate in public spheres and activities.

142. A set of complementary training schemes oriented towards the access of women to employment and entrepreneurship, including reintegration into work after maternity or parental leave or loss of jobs, should be designed. The schemes should include on-the-job training for upgrading skills, in-house and vocational training, retraining for acquiring specific skills or for combining generic technical and social skills, access to higher education and training for older women, and granting of educational credit for prior learning.

143. Governments should seek to enhance the self-reliance of special groups of women, such as young women, disabled women, elderly women and women belonging to racial and ethnic minorities, and to facilitate their continuing participation in society. Appropriate measures should be implemented to secure economic support for all women, in particular elderly women going through divorce and whose earning abilities are reduced as a result of the division of labour during the marriage. To the extent possible, working conditions should be adjusted to suit the needs of disabled women and these women should be guaranteed legal protection against ungrounded job loss on account of their disabilities.

6. Health needs of women

144. Women's health situation is critical to their general well-being. The pursuit of women's health does not only and primarily benefit women themselves, but serves the interests of society at large, including the promotion of equal treatment between women and men workers and the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities. Governments at the national, and where appropriate, local levels should therefore:

(a) Develop accessible, acceptable and affordable gender-sensitive health services for women and girls, without discrimination against any group and with due attention to disadvantaged groups, including disabled women, with age-appropriate acute, chronic and long-term care services for physical, mental and addictive disorders;

(b) Provide prevention, screening and early intervention services for women and girls, including counselling and education, that may offer better protection from, and earlier detection of, chronic diseases affecting women that develop during the life-cycle, particularly reproductive health problems but also cardiovascular diseases, various forms of cancer, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS and osteoporosis;

(c) Develop measures to reduce environmental and occupational hazards that may affect women's health and infant and maternal mortality and morbidity;

(d) Increase research on women's health problems linked to their employment in traditional and non-traditional fields and take measures, along with the social partners, to prevent work-related hazards

and to improve treatment in order to alleviate women's work-related health problems.

(e) Take steps to eliminate violence against women and address its emotional, mental and physical health consequences throughout their lives, and seek also to eradicate harmful traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation;

(f) Based on the Programme of Action adopted by the International Conference on Population and Development, it is the right of women and men to be informed about and to have access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable methods of family planning of their choice, as well as to other methods of their choice for regulation of fertility which are not against the law, and access to appropriate health-care services that enable women to go safely through pregnancy and childbirth and provide couples with the best chance of having a healthy infant. These rights rest on the recognition of the basic right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly on the number, spacing and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so, and the right to attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health. These rights also include the right of all to make decisions concerning reproduction free of discrimination, coercion and violence, as expressed in human rights documents.

The high incidence of induced abortions in many countries of the ECE region testifies to a lack of quality family planning services. Women who suffer from complications arising from unsafe abortion should have access to quality services. Post-abortion counselling, education and family planning services should be offered promptly, which will also help to avoid repeat abortion;

(g) Ensure that all women and girls have access to high quality health information and education related to sexual and reproductive health, safe motherhood and breastfeeding, diet, substance abuse, environmental hazards and other areas that may affect their lifelong health and well-being. This information and education should not be dependent on any commercial interest;

(h) Increase support for:

(i) the research, development and introduction of reproductive health technologies, in partnership with research institutions;

(ii) biomedical, behavioural, epidemiological and health service research into diseases and conditions that affect women specifically or differently, such as breast cancer and infections of the reproductive tract, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS;

(i) Assure that women are full participants in all phases of research design and implementation, and that all research results and findings are reported disaggregated by age, gender and socio-economic status as well as by other subcategories as appropriate to the topic;

(j) Increase participation of women in professional and managerial positions in health institutions through training and supportive action;

(k) Train all health-care professionals to respond appropriately to women's health issues, not only physical but also mental;

(l) Recognizing the rights, duties and responsibilities of parents and other persons legally responsible for adolescents, provide, in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of adolescents, appropriate direction and guidance in sexual and reproductive matters. Countries must ensure that the

programmes and attitude of health-care providers do not restrict the access of adolescents to the appropriate services and information they need, including on sexually transmitted diseases and sexual abuse. In doing so, and in order inter alia to address sexual abuse, these services must safeguard the rights of adolescents to privacy, confidentiality, respect and informed consent, respecting cultural values and religious beliefs. In this context, countries should, where appropriate, remove legal, regulatory and social barriers to reproductive health information and care for adolescents.

E. Promote full participation of women in public life

145. Any society claiming to be democratic must take care that it provides equal opportunities for all its members. It must respect the right of all, women and men alike to self-expression and self-realization. One of the requirements of democracy must be the participation, on an equal footing, of women and men in all walks of life. Thus the promotion of women's participation, including at the highest levels, in party politics and in decision-making processes is needed in order to strengthen democracy for both women and men. Women in politics and decision-making positions in Governments and legislative bodies contribute to redefining political priorities; placing new items on the political agenda which reflect and address women's gender-specific concerns, values and experiences; and providing new perspectives on mainstream political issues. Therefore measures should be taken by all sectors of society, particularly Governments, non-governmental organizations, political parties and the social partners, to promote the full and equal participation of women in public and political life.

146. Political parties should be encouraged to take the necessary measures to ensure that women's participation and empowerment is assured and that women have the same opportunities as men to participate in the activities of political parties, such as scheduling meetings at convenient times and in places providing child care. Political parties should be encouraged to provide training on equal opportunities for all their members, male and female, to enable them to have access to responsibility in the decision-making bodies of these parties.

147. Political parties should be encouraged to ensure a balance between the number of men and women candidates running for office and take measures to give equally qualified men and women equal opportunities to belong to decision-making bodies at all levels of the party's structure. On a strictly interim basis, these measures may include affirmative action measures to be decided by the parties themselves and with the encouragement of other actors, including Governments. Wherever the temporary special measure chosen is a quota system, it is proposed that the quota should not target women but that, in a spirit of equity, it may be established that neither sex may occupy a proportion of seats inferior to a given percentage and that women should have equal access to eligible places on electoral lists.

148. Women should be offered political training, including training in leadership and decision-making, public speaking and self-assertion courses, as well as in political campaigning starting at the local community level.

149. All Governments of the region should establish the goal of gender balance in governmental bodies and committees, as well as in administrative entities. Women should not be confined to those sectors where women are traditionally found, such as education, health and welfare, but should have access to the full range of government and other public appointments. For this purpose, Governments should consider setting specific targets and implement measures to increase the proportion of women in government positions, as well as women in high positions in public administration, with a view to applying the principle of equal opportunity.

150. Governments should promote equal rights legislation and positive action which facilitate the hiring, promotion and training of women so that women are offered equal career opportunities to enter and advance within the public sector and private labour market.

151. Governments should take steps to monitor and evaluate progress in the representation of women by, for example, encouraging the collection and dissemination of statistics on the number of women and men, in particular at higher levels, in various decision-making bodies from the local to the international levels. This information should be made available to the public. Governments should also develop ways and means of having the views of the most relevant women's organizations before taking decisions that are especially important to women.

152. Governments should guarantee the right of women to be members of trade unions. Trade unions and employers' associations should be encouraged to make efforts and take measures to increase and improve equality of opportunity in their ranks, as well as women's representation in their decision-making bodies and in negotiations in all areas and at all levels.

153. Sport and sport-related organizations should be encouraged to develop policies and programmes that increase the number of women coaches, decision makers, officials and sports personnel at all levels, particularly when the organization receives funds from the Government. Similar incentives should be taken in the fields of art and culture.

154. NGOs, youth organizations and other groups taking initiatives for promoting the advancement of women through grassroots activities, networking and advocacy should receive encouragement and all forms of support and access to information from Governments at the central, provincial and local levels.

155. The mass media have a powerful influence on forming public opinion and reflecting societies. It should be kept in mind that they have a particularly strong influence on children and young adults. The media, both public and private, should make special efforts to contribute effectively to the empowerment of women and to promote equality between women and men.

156. Guidelines for gender equality in the media, in employment and training policies, as well as programming, should be developed and implemented. National machineries should carefully focus their continued attention on the action of the media in this respect, with a view to increasing public awareness of these issues.

157. The media, both public and private, should promote women's access to high-level positions, with a view to influencing policies and programmes in this sector.

158. The media should be made aware of current stereotyping in order to avoid stereotyped portrayal of women and men through self-regulation. The media industry should be encouraged to develop, monitor and enforce standards of conduct to avoid stereotypical, demeaning and degrading portrayals of women, especially of violence against women. Women should be encouraged and given means to express their opinions about such stereotyping and to demonstrate their role in economic and social life.

159. Monitoring and change of the image of women, need also to be promoted through research into women's activities and the findings should be discussed in both political and public debates. Furthermore research and findings on women and the media should be shared internationally to support concerted action in an increasingly global sector.

160. The United Nations system should set an example for the recruitment and promotion of women to decision-making positions by steadily improving gender balance at all levels and in all areas of the secretariat structure. The targets established by the United Nations in this regard, including in particular the achievement of gender balance by the year 2005, should be met and present efforts to do so should be increased. In addition, international financial institutions should ensure gender balance and representation of diversity in decision-making positions.

161. Closely linked to the promotion of women to decision-making positions, as well as to the objective of eliminating violence against women, is the need for Governments to take action to ensure gender balance in peace negotiations, peace-keeping and conflict resolution, which are primarily male domains in most countries of the region. Guidelines can be drawn from the United Nations declaration on the participation of women in promoting international peace and cooperation. Governments should draw on the experience of non-governmental women's peace organizations in promoting peace.

162. Governments should develop mechanisms for the advancement of women as well as promote the mainstreaming of women's concerns in all areas of decision-making, if necessary by reallocating resources.

F. Develop more gender-specific statistical systems, data and gender research

163. Gender research and women's studies should be used as a crucial analytical tool for work on gender equality and be given adequate resources.

164. As part of their ongoing programmes, statistical services should collect, maintain and improve data, including economic and financial data disaggregated by sex, including improvement in the concepts and methodologies used to assess and monitor women's contributions to the economy and society. They should analyse these data and provide other timely, reliable statistics on the situation of women and men in order to eliminate gender stereotypes, raise the awareness of policy makers, provide an unbiased basis for policies and measures, promote and provide ideas for change, and monitor and evaluate the impact of the implementation of policies and measures on women and men.

165. In order to accord greater visibility to, and promote greater understanding of, the relative economic contributions of women and men through paid and unpaid work, Governments should encourage the improvement of methods for measuring work, especially unpaid work in areas such as agriculture, food production and household work. In this respect Governments should encourage the regular production and dissemination of time-use studies and other related approaches. Advancing these analytical methods is important to improve the understanding of women's and men's full contribution to the economy and thus constitutes a more comprehensive basis for government and other policies at all levels.

166. In order to monitor and reduce the magnitude of such practices, statistical services should also collect data disaggregated by age, sex and ethnic group, to measure the extent of children's and adolescents' labour exploitation and make more visible the economic gain of educating girls.

167. Methodologies for establishing appropriate national indicators should be developed and monitored so as to reflect the effect of inflation and all relevant economic changes on the economic status and quality of life.

168. Statistical and qualitative studies on and monitoring of the number of women and men in senior positions, including at a high level in economic decision-making in the public and private sector, are needed.

169. Improved and age-specific data on all forms of violence against women, such as sexual harassment, incidence of rape, incest and sexual abuse, and on trafficking in women are needed. Such data should note any family relationship between the perpetrator and complainant.

170. Improved and age-specific data on health and environmental risks are needed.

171. New concepts, definitions and standards, together with corresponding targets, should be developed in close connection with the users of statistical data, reflecting the situation of women and men in today's society. This includes, for example, concepts related to household, family and individual income as well as paid and unpaid work. In order to ensure continuity, a special unit or focal point in the national statistical offices, and staff with gender expertise, should be considered.

172. Statistics based on the individual must be produced in order to follow the living conditions and earnings through a lifetime.

173. The results of gender research and women's studies should be made available for decision makers, the media, women's organizations and others concerned. Systems producing prognoses aimed at facilitating the decision-making process in society should be designed in such a way as to counterbalance the different impact of proposed policies on women and men. Gender impact assessment must be integrated into all policy and planning.

174. Governments are called upon to produce gender- and age-specific statistics regularly that could be widely distributed and easily understood, including fact sheets, brief reports and press releases, illustrating and explaining the major trends in the evolution of the status of women at all stages of their lives.

175. Regional technical cooperation aimed at supporting countries in transition to develop and strengthen their national statistical systems, particularly as they relate to the above-mentioned issues, needs to be encouraged.

176. Governments should seek to develop gender impact analysis of all sectoral policies and development programmes, national budgets and development plans, and international trade agreements.

177. Women are still a minority in senior positions in universities and research institutions. Measures should be developed to promote women's participation in science and technology in such a way as to allow for the reconciliation of the demands of scientific work, the development of relevant qualifications and child-care responsibilities. Women's science, research and studies should be an integrated element of the different sections of universities and research institutions.

G. Promote intra- and interregional solidarity and cooperation for the empowerment of women

178. Governments, the social partners and NGOs should explore and implement ways and means of strengthening cooperation among themselves in order to promote the empowerment of women everywhere in the ECE region, with emphasis on the demands and needs of women in countries in transition, refugee and displaced women, and other disadvantaged women.

179. Regional and subregional intergovernmental organizations, such as CSCE, the Council of Europe and ECE are called upon to strengthen their contribution to such cooperation within their respective area of competence, including analytical and statistical work, the application of international and subregional standards, exchange of experiences and operational programmes, as well as dissemination of results.

180. International financial institutions have an important role to play in ensuring that the funding they provide is used in ways that respect international labour standards and promote gender equality.

181. Mainstreaming of the gender perspective should be applied to cooperation programmes aimed at developing the private sector of the economy in the countries in transition. Western establishments and joint ventures should be stimulated through these programmes to apply and promote non-discrimination and affirmative action measures.

182. In the socio-economic arena, corporations, social partners, the media and NGOs, should develop various forms of cooperation and networking across all countries of the ECE region and with other regions.

183. Within the framework of bilateral and multilateral cooperation, support should be given to the education and training of girls and women in other regions of the world and to building-up networks for this purpose.

184. Governments should reaffirm their commitment, made with the adoption of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, to international solidarity to support women in this region as well as in all regions of the world. This commitment should be realized by mainstreaming the gender perspective in all development policies and programmes and by recognizing the importance of special actions to support the empowerment of women. The specific training needs of countries with economies in transition should be given special attention, and support to the efforts of less developed regions should be promoted.

V. MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION AND FOLLOW-UP IN THE ECE REGION

185. In deciding how best to implement the strategic objectives derived from the identified critical areas of concern, full account needs to be taken of the specific characteristics of each area and the elements common to all. Most policies and actions are both sectoral and cross-sectoral. They should address issues that have many dimensions – financial, legal, institutional and societal and cultural. Equally the implementation of recommended action for the advancement of women requires interaction among many parties.

186. National Governments have a central role to play in implementing the strategic objectives for the advancement of women. Equally, local NGOs and grass-roots organizations have a special role to play in creating a social and intellectual climate responsive to women's quests and aspirations. Women representing different needs and perspectives including disabled, older and young women, lesbians, women of colour and indigenous women, and low-income women should be actively involved at all stages and levels of design, development and implementation.

187. Governments and international organizations should recognize that non-governmental organizations and their members play an important role in the advancement of women by formulating recommendations and implementing decisions made at United Nations World Conferences on Women, Preparatory Committee meetings and other meetings concerning the advancement of women. It is

therefore important that measures be taken to provide NGOs with opportunities to make their input known.

A. National implementation and follow-up

188. Governments should (a) commit themselves at the highest political level to achieving the goals and objectives contained in this Regional Platform for Action and (b) take a leading role in coordinating the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of follow-up action.

189. All countries should establish appropriate national follow-up, accountability and monitoring mechanisms, in partnership with non-governmental organizations, community groups and the academic community as well as with the support of parliamentarians.

190. To reflect the priorities of action for the equality between men and women related to the strategic objectives, Governments should consider sets of national strategies for the advancement of women. Governments should consult women's NGOs regarding the development of legislation and in the preparation of national strategies and when dealing with issues related to the labour market the national social partners.

191. Within the framework of such strategies, each country should develop and implement comprehensive policies aimed at its specific priorities and identify policies and measures expected to have a high impact on the empowerment of women.

192. Strategies for equality between men and women should also include national targets within a time-frame and a mechanism for regular review, revision and enforcement. Targets should define problems more precisely to lend transparency to government policies and ensure accountability.

193. Governments, NGOs and other partners in development cooperation should develop strategies and specific measures, as well as monitoring mechanisms, to ensure effective mainstreaming of gender aspects and empowerment of women through development efforts, within the region as well as in other regions of the world.

194. Strategies should clearly assign responsibilities to the main actors responsible for their further development and implementation. Specific programmes need to be conceived and implemented at national, provincial and local levels.

195. In order to promote equality between men and women and the empowerment of women, including in decision-making processes, Governments should commit themselves to the goal of gender equality and gender balance in decision-making, inter alia by assigning the political responsibility of the coordination of gender equality policies to a Cabinet Minister.

196. Governments that have not already done so should establish national machineries for the advancement or women, i.e. bodies or mechanisms that are designated by the Governments as the central policy coordinating unit to promote gender equality. Governments should also support NGOs dealing with women's issues, especially women's youth organizations. The national machineries should be encouraged to disseminate information on national and international mechanisms and strategies established and decisions made to NGOs.

197. Such central policy units should fall under the authority of the Government and be located within the government structure, at the highest level, allowing it to have a direct effect on government

policy. To carry out their task continuously and efficiently, they should be sufficiently financed from special allocations in the national budget and should employ sufficiently large numbers of professional staff.

198. Notwithstanding the institutional arrangements, established mechanisms or bodies for the equal opportunity for women should be attached to or report to the highest possible level, such as the office of the President or Prime Minister, and periodically to their parliament. They should be provided with the financial resources and authority to implement and monitor the national strategy for the advancement of women.

199. Supplementing the establishment of special mechanisms for the advancement of women and gender equality, routine procedures could be established in all areas and at all levels of policy-making to assure gender-sensitivity in decision-making and public planning. Policy makers in sectoral ministries should be trained in gender analysis. This would allow gender-related issues and targets of a sectoral nature to be taken up by line ministers and/or sectoral institutions.

200. Monitoring and evaluation of national strategies and targets should be primarily done at national level; exchanges at the political, professional, academic and non-governmental, including grass-roots levels, should be stimulated in an open manner in which public authorities would organize discussions on the implementation of the Platform for Action, both regional and global. Proper information material has to be provided for that purpose. The process would also facilitate the preparations of national reports of State parties required by CEDAW and other reports relating to existing international conventions and other instruments of international law.

201. On the national level, it is necessary that Governments recognize the role of NGOs, enable them to finance their activities and ensure that their status is recognized and respected at all levels.

B. Subregional,regional and inter-regional cooperation and follow-up

202. Within the framework of intra and interregional approaches and multilateral arrangements, specific consultation mechanisms should be developed, primarily within the existing regional organizations and, if necessary, new mechanisms should be established within existing resources to ensure the participation of all countries and all partners concerned in the preparation, implementation and monitoring of programmes corresponding to the strategic objectives.

203. Regional or subregional groupings are thus encouraged to provide an opportunity for increasing cooperation for the advancement of women, and members of such organizations, especially countries in transition, are to be invited to explore new possibilities for opening cooperation to support the advancement of women in the economic, social and political as in the peace and security fields.

204. International and regional financial institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization and the regional development banks should promote and support economic and social policies that comply with and further international human rights commitments, and, specifically, commitments to women's equality.

205. Monitoring the implementation of the Regional Platform for Action should be carried out primarily through the existing regional organizations, such as the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the Council of Europe, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) as well as by the European Union, and by the sub-regional bodies, in line with their competence. Exchange of experiences from various national

monitoring exercises should be facilitated, e.g. by organizing regional meetings. Such initial meetings should be jointly organized by major regional organizations according to their respective priority areas and budgetary resources.

206. In addition to regional cooperation among Governments, institutions such as trade unions, professional and trade associations, academic and non-governmental organizations should be encouraged to launch similar cooperation processes at the regional level.

207. Advancement of women offers immense possibilities for increased transparency, accountability, equity and networking focused on the Regional Platform for Action and based on well-defined strategies and targets.

208. At the regional level intergovernmental organizations should develop specialized units working with women's NGOs; formulate specific NGO cooperation programmes; and integrate an NGO dimension into their training projects.

C. The regional role of the United Nations system

209. The new trend in the United Nations system to integrate economic and social issues and programmes could be strengthened by the rich experience of women-related activities which need to be mainstreamed. For this purpose, the United Nations system should play a significant role in organizing debates and exchange of experiences on specific aspects of the implementation of strategic objectives, in close cooperation with other global and regional organizations. Accordingly, within existing resources, reporting systems and mechanisms should be strengthened within the United Nations system and its specialized agencies as a whole to facilitate an integrated approach to both the implementation and the monitoring of such strategic objectives, preferably through joint programming of specific activities. In this spirit, the follow-up to the Regional Platform for Action could contribute to the following:

(a) Intergovernmental discussions on economic and social trends and policies, at both macro and sectoral levels, should be conducted with due consideration given to the major guidelines provided by the Platform for Action;

(b) Regional offices of the specialized United Nations bodies and agencies should as appropriate, develop and publicize a plan of action for implementing the Platform for Action, including the identification of time-frames and resources;

(c) ECE should mainstream women's issues and gender perspective within its existing mandate and activities, inter alia statistics and economic analysis. ECE should, at its next annual session, consider the establishment of mechanisms and processes to ensure the implementation and monitoring of the Regional Platform for Action;

(d) Technical assistance and operational activities at the regional level should establish well-identified targets for the advancement of women. To this end, regular consultations should be convened within the context of regular meetings among United Nations bodies and agencies;

(e) An international centre for NGOs in countries in transition might be established and located in central or eastern Europe. Such a centre should coordinate and facilitate contacts between NGOs, the United Nations system and Governments, and serve as a focal point for promoting capacity-

building and exchanging information on statistical data and ongoing research in order to assist those countries where such data and research are insufficient or non-existent. Such a centre could also serve as a coordinating centre for monitoring, promoting and assisting in the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies and the 1995 Platform for Action.

VI. MOBILIZING FINANCIAL RESOURCES FOR IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

210. Strategies for the advancement of women, which must be based on their full participation, will require adequate funding.

211. The economic and social benefits of investing in women substantially outweigh the costs. In order to ensure the necessary financial means for, and realize the returns from, the advancement of women in ECE countries, adequate resources should be made available for priority actions and/or special projects for equality between men and women. Moreover, the goal of achieving equality should be integrated in all relevant policy areas and budgetary decisions. Methodologies of gender impact analysis should be developed and implemented to investigate and, where appropriate, correct the gender differentiated effects of policy measures.

212. With regard to development assistance, and assistance to countries in transition, adequate attention and resources must also be directed to the goal of women's advancement through a combination of special programmes and mainstreaming.

213. The establishment of global goals for resource mobilization has been used in promoting implementation in many areas of regional and international concern such as agriculture, education and population (at the International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo in September 1994). Establishing such goals with regard to the empowerment of women may be an important means of supporting the strategies and actions set forth in this document, and the platforms for action being prepared by other regions in preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women to be held at Beijing.

Such goals should be realistic, and should represent best efforts to define or focus on the fundamental elements of what might constitute an effective core programme for women's empowerment while in no way undermining the importance of mainstreaming for the advancement of women. This will entail addressing a number of challenging methodological difficulties. Efforts to do so are now underway in a number of national and international organizations. These efforts should be supported. This Meeting requests that this issue be put on the agenda of the March 1995 session of the Commission on the Status of Women, and urges the General Assembly to request that, within existing resources, the Secretary-General report to that session on the state of the art in this field and on the feasibility of convening an Expert Group Meeting on this issue, consisting of government and other experts and relevant United Nations agencies.

214. For economies in transition, domestic targets should be supported by increased flows of international assistance, including financial assistance. A significant contribution in mobilizing resources for these purposes could be made by bilateral and multilateral donors and by global and regional institutions of the United Nations system, as well as by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and other international organizations and financial institutions.

215. Given the likely magnitude of the financial resource needs, the ECE countries should explore

innovative financing, including new ways of generating public and private financing for both domestic and development assistance programmes. The private sector, including NGOs, can also contribute to mobilizing resources for the implementation of strategies for the advancement of women, for example, in such areas as housing, health-care, child-care, environmental protection, training, and other social benefits. Governments should encourage and facilitate the private sector to do so by the various means at their disposal.

216. International and national financial institutions, and bilateral assistance programmes, should be encouraged to provide financial services to women, including saving opportunities and credit for all levels of entrepreneurial activities.

217. At the regional level the significant role that could be played in mobilizing resources by the concerned global and regional institutions of the United Nations system, as well as by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, should be recognized and encouraged. ECE member States should also seek ways and means of supporting efforts in less developed regions of the world.

218. Governments and other partners in development cooperation should examine their spending priorities to ensure that sufficient resources are made available for the implementation and follow-up of the recommendations for the empowerment of women in this and other regions, made by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the World Conference on Human Rights, the International Conference on Population and Development as well as the recommendations of the ECE High-level Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Fourth World Conference on Women. ECE countries should also strive to reach the agreed target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for overall official development assistance and endeavour to increase the share of development assistance funding for programmes to support women's empowerment.

219. Countries should give every consideration to increasing their support to UNIFEM.

220. Efforts to create synergies between the regional United Nations entities and other regional or sub-regional groupings, as well as between NGOs and research institutions, need to be developed for fostering solidarity related to the implementation of the strategic objectives and targets.